

Report summary

Beyond 2012 – outstanding physical education for all

Physical education in schools 2008–12

This report is based on evidence from inspections of physical education between September 2008 and July 2012. Her Majesty's Inspectors and additional inspectors from Ofsted visited 120 primary schools, 110 secondary schools and seven special schools. This report draws also on evidence from four visits to schools to observe good practice in PE.

Part A provides an overview of findings about pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and the leadership and management of physical education in the schools visited. It evaluates the impact of the recommendations made in an earlier report, *Working towards 2012 and beyond*. It recommends actions for schools and the Department for Education to secure further improvement in the quality of physical education in schools.

Part B identifies the common weaknesses seen in PE and looks at what the most effective schools have done to overcome these weaknesses so that physical education is good or outstanding.

Key findings

Primary schools

- Achievement was good or outstanding in two thirds of schools visited. Boys and girls, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs made similar progress in PE.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils had achieved age-related expectations, including in swimming. However, a fifth of schools visited had not ensured that every pupil could swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' achievement and enjoyment of school, including their personal development and well-being, were enhanced significantly by opportunities to train as playground buddies and junior sports leaders.

- Teaching was good or outstanding in more than two thirds of schools visited. None of the schools visited had inadequate teaching. Where it required improvement, the main weaknesses were the teachers' limited subject knowledge and use of assessment which led to superficial planning and insufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils.
- In a quarter of schools, pupils were not challenged to improve their personal fitness sufficiently. Warm-ups were too short and too easy, and were often followed by long periods of inactivity as teachers introduced the lesson. Only a few schools had adapted PE programmes to suit the individual needs of obese pupils, or engaged with health agencies, parents and carers to improve the lifestyle of these pupils.
- The quality of the PE curriculum was good or outstanding in over three quarters of schools visited. Most schools provided two hours of PE each week¹ and have enhanced their provision to achieve a good balance of games, gymnastics, swimming, dance and athletic activities. They provided a wide range of after-school clubs and inter-school competitions.
- The impact of school sport partnerships² in maximising participation and increasing regular competition was clearly evident in the vast majority of schools visited. Participation rates were very high but only a few primary schools taught selected activities in sufficient depth or played competitive sport to a very high standard.
- Leadership and management of PE were good or outstanding in over two thirds of schools visited. Professional development and training provided by school sports partnerships had increased subject leaders' knowledge and understanding of self-evaluation, action-planning and curriculum development, and empowered them to lead improvements to PE. However, assessment procedures were less well developed in the majority of schools visited.

Secondary schools

- Achievement was good or outstanding in almost three quarters of schools visited. In GCSE PE and BTEC Sport, achievement in lessons was good or outstanding in most schools. GCSE PE A* to C results improved by six percentage points during the period of this survey.

¹ Two hours of PE and school sport each week was an aspirational target for schools introduced by the previous government. There is no statutory requirement for schools to devote a specific amount of time to PE.

² School sport partnerships (SSPs) are one strand of the previous government's Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links strategy launched in 2002. They are families of secondary, primary and special schools working together to increase the quality and quantity of PE and sports opportunities for young people.

- Pupils with special educational needs made similar progress to other pupils in PE. Boys' and girls' progress in GCSE PE was similar to the national trend where boys tended to out-perform girls in practical lessons, particularly in invasion games.
- Pupil's achievement and enjoyment, and their personal development and well-being were enhanced significantly by opportunities to gain qualifications in sports leadership, coaching and refereeing, and organising sport for others.
- Teaching was good or outstanding in more than three quarters of schools visited. Where teaching was outstanding, planning and assessment procedures were systematic and rigorous. Pupils' learning and progress were accelerated by regular, precise feedback and extended periods of time to practise skills.
- The needs of gifted and talented pupils were met through additional provision and personalised support programmes for them. However, their needs and those of other more able pupils were not always met in lessons. Low expectations, too much teacher-talk and insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn independently meant that some of them were not fully challenged to work hard and achieve their very best. In some lessons, tasks were not challenging enough, time to practise and improve skills was too short and there were too few opportunities to select and apply newly acquired skills in competitive situations.
- The previous Ofsted PE survey recommended that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and professional associations linked to PE develop a common strategy to support schools in assessing core PE in Key Stage 4. This survey found little evidence of a common approach being used. Schools devised their own procedures or chose not to assess students' progress throughout Key Stage 4.
- The previous Ofsted PE report also recommended that schools develop effective assessment information to transfer within, and between, schools. This survey found that very few secondary schools had responded to this by actively seeking assessment information from their feeder primary schools to plan the Key Stage 3 curriculum and monitor students' progress in PE.
- Over three quarters of the schools visited had a good or outstanding PE curriculum. In Key Stage 4, accredited awards in PE were taught alongside, or as part of, core provision.³ A range of alternative activities, such as street dance, outdoor pursuits and golf, captured the interest of those not suited to team games or at risk of disengaging from traditional PE activities. However, weak assessment procedures and minimal time for core PE fuelled the perceptions of a very small minority of pupils that PE was merely 'a break from academic study'.
- Sports enrichment was central to the ethos of most schools visited and led to extensive provision of after-school clubs, inter-school competitions and fixtures,

³ Core PE at Key Stage 4 is the provision for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to ensure coverage of National Curriculum expectations. In addition to this, students can choose to pursue an accredited award in PE or sport.

and training for sports leaders. In a small minority of secondary schools, including some sports colleges where PE was outstanding, the balance between maximising participation and generating elite performance had been achieved and sport was played to a very high standard.

- Fitness training was often taught as a discrete unit of work, but was not regularly reinforced in other PE lessons in a quarter of schools visited. Opportunities to observe and evaluate others' work were overdone at the expense of high-intensity, sustained physical activity. Only a few of the schools had coherent plans to tailor PE provision to support obese pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle by engaging them in regular physical activity.
- Leadership and management of PE were good or outstanding in over three quarters of schools visited. In more than one third of them, leadership and management were outstanding. In these schools, subject leaders were expert practitioners who inspired others to support their relentless drive for improvement. However, in one in five schools visited, subject leadership required improvement. Weaknesses in teaching had not been tackled well enough and improvement planning had not led to long-term gains in pupils' achievement.

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